

DURDAN'S PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

MISSING CHILD POLICY



Policy Reviewed On: June 2019

Next Review Date: June 2020

Policy statement

Children's safety is upheld as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every adult who works at the School has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the Headteacher/Deputy.
- The Headteacher/Deputy will carry out a thorough search of the building and gardens.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The Headteacher/Deputy will talk to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and will make a record.
- The Headteacher/Deputy will contact the Chair of Governors and reports the incident. The Chair of Governors will instruct a member of the Senior Leadership Team to carry out an investigation as soon as possible.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Headteacher and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Headteacher has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

Before the outing is to take place staff will ensure the following:

- The lead member of staff on the outing has the trip phone
- That all adults attending the outing have a copy of the trip phone number and the school phone number.
- That all children will have a wristband with the school address and phone number on.
- That all adults attending the outing will be briefed on the day and the lead member of staff will ensure all adults attending are aware of a 'central meeting point' at the venue.

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate area but does not search beyond that.

- The Headteacher/Deputy is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The Head contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Head contacts the parent, who makes their way to the school or outing venue as agreed. The school is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the school.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.

- The Headteacher/Deputy will contact the Chair of Governors and reports the incident. The Chair of Governors will instruct a member of the Senior Leadership Team to carry out an investigation as soon as possible.
- The designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Headteacher/Deputy will speak to the parent(s).
- The Chair of Governors and SLT carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- We would inform the Local Authority.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Headteacher/Deputy needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents may feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff or single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the Headteacher. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Head and the other should be the Deputy Head or Chair of Governors. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Headteacher and Governing Body will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.